

## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



1  
Ag 86  
Reserve

Res  
350661  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY.

## THE FOOD PRODUCTION OUTLOOK.

### Accomplishment by Farmers in 1917 Furnishes Ground for Encouragement But Affords No Justification for Any Let-up in Efforts to Produce and Conserve Food.

Statement by David F. Houston, Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., Feb. 16, 1918.

FEBRUARY 16, 1918.

(The Secretary of Agriculture to-day made the following statement bearing on the leading results of the planting and production activities in 1917. It furnishes ground for encouragement that the farmers of the Nation can again overcome difficulties and produce a large supply of foods and feedstuffs this year, but it does not afford justification for any let-up in production activities or in conservation efforts.)

The production of food crops and of animals and animal products is always a matter of great interest to all the people of the Nation. At this particular time it is of especial interest and concern. Statistics regarding the acreages and yields of important food crops planted during the year 1917 have been available in the Department of Agriculture for some time and have been made public. The recent report of the Bureau of Crop Estimates on the number of live stock on farms and ranges, however, makes it possible now to exhibit a summary of the principal results of the farmers' operations for the year.

Naturally, when the Nation entered the war on April 6, 1917, there was much confusion and apprehension as to the possibility of increasing or even of maintaining agricultural production. There was special concern as to the sufficiency of the supply of labor that would be available for farming operations, and much apprehension was manifested over the disturbance of the supply as the result of industrial demands and the drafting or volunteering of men for service in the Army and Navy. As a matter of fact, there was no little disturbance and in some sections the situation was especially acute. There were other difficulties confronting the farmers, including those of securing fertilizer and machinery in sufficient quantities at a reasonable cost. Notwithstanding all the difficulties, however, the farmers, patriotically responding to the appeals to them and influenced by the prevailing prices, labored energetically to meet the needs of this Nation for food and also those of the friendly nations in Europe. They planted the largest acreages in the history of the country, produced and harvested record crops of most products except wheat, and succeeded in increasing the number of live stock, including not only work animals, but meat and milk animals.

The achievements of the farmers and livestock men furnish cause for congratulation and encouragement, but not for complacency or for any let-up this year in efforts to better the record and to conserve food. The necessity of again securing large yields from the farms and ranches this year has been strikingly emphasized by the President in his message to the farmers of the country and is steadily being pointed out by the Department of Agriculture and other agencies through various channels, including especially the extensive farm demonstration activities of the department and the State agricultural colleges. Specific suggestions are now under consideration for the spring campaign and will be made public in the near future. It is clear that it will be economically wise and advantageous for the farmers of the Nation to put forth their best efforts during the coming season to equal and, if possible, to exceed their record of last year. In spite of the large production in many directions during 1917, the situation is not satisfactory. The supply of wheat in this Nation and in the world is inadequate. Owing to short crops in preceding years, the reserves of a number of important commodities have been greatly reduced. Whether the war continues or not, the demand on this country, because of the increasing population and of the needs of Europe, will be great. They will continue to be great for a considerable period even after peace returns. There will be an especially strong demand made on this country for meats and live stock.

The record of farmers last year, made in the face of obstacles, is ground for confidence on their part that, with equal application and organization, they can overcome the difficulties this year. Unquestionably there will be difficulties to surmount—difficulties in respect to labor and in respect to fertilizers, both as to price and quantity. Prices of farm machinery also with other things have risen. In some respects, the farm-labor situation may not be quite so difficult as last year, although it will continue to be especially acute in certain sections of the country. The cantonments have been built and there will not be a renewal of urgent demands in many sections for labor for such work. The draft regulations provide for the deferred classification of skilled farm labor. The popula-

tion of the country has increased somewhat within the past year. The Secretary of War has asked Congress for power to furlough soldiers of the National Army for agricultural service if necessary.

Bearing these matters in mind, it seems highly likely that the farmers, by exercising their talent for cooperation and organization, with such assistance as can be furnished by governmental and other agencies, will again be able to overcome the difficulties. The Departments of Agriculture and Labor are continuing to develop their organizations to assist farmers in securing the labor needed in their operations. They are especially planning to assist in the transfer of labor from community to community and from State to State.

#### Acreage of Leading Food Crops.

The farmers of the Nation planted during 1917 an acreage of 246,275,000 of the leading food crops (winter wheat, spring wheat, corn, oats, barley, rye, buckwheat, rice, Irish potatoes, and sweet potatoes), which was 23,038,000 acres (10 per cent) greater than the acreage in 1916, and 32,339,000 (15 per cent) greater than the average for the five years preceding the outbreak of the European war.

The details for the three periods are given in Table 1.

TABLE 1.—Acreage of leading food crops, 1917, 1916, and average for five years preceding the outbreak of the European war.

Crop.	1917	1916	Five-year average 1910-1914—prewar (normal) condition.
	<i>Acres.</i>	<i>Acres.</i>	<i>Acres.</i>
Winter wheat.....	42,170,000	40,534,000	35,724,000
Spring wheat.....	18,511,000	17,607,000	18,799,000
Corn.....	119,755,000	105,296,000	105,240,000
Oats.....	43,572,000	41,527,000	38,014,000
Barley.....	8,835,000	7,757,000	7,593,000
Rye.....	6,119,000	4,480,000	2,710,000
Buckwheat.....	1,005,000	828,000	826,000
Rice.....	964,000	869,000	733,000
Potatoes.....	4,390,000	3,565,000	3,686,000
Sweet potatoes.....	953,000	774,000	611,000
Total.....	246,275,000	223,237,000	213,936,000

#### Production of Leading Food Crops.

The farmers not only planted these acreages, but they harvested record crops of corn, oats, barley, buckwheat, and Irish



and sweet potatoes. The total production of these products and of spring wheat and rice was 5,771,928,000 bushels, or 1,204,659,000 bushels (26 per cent) more than in 1916, and 1,002,442,000 (21 per cent) more than the average for the five-year period (1910-1914). Winter wheat and rye are omitted from this comparison because the 1917 harvests of these crops were from sowings made in the fall of 1916, before the United States entered the war. It should be borne in mind in this connection that the percentage of soft corn this year was very much higher than usual, and also that the aggregate crop of spring and winter wheat harvested in 1917 was short.

The details regarding the production of the crops referred to for the three periods are given in Table 2.

TABLE 2.—*Total production of leading crops planted in 1917 and 1916, and average for five years preceding outbreak of European war.*

Crop.	1917	1916	Five-year average, 1910-1914—prewar (normal) condition.
	<i>Bushels.</i>	<i>Bushels.</i>	<i>Bushels.</i>
Spring wheat..	232,758,000	155,765,000	233,571,000
Corn.....	3,159,494,000	2,566,927,000	2,732,457,000
Oats.....	1,587,286,000	1,251,837,000	1,157,961,000
Barley.....	208,975,000	182,309,000	186,208,000
Buckwheat....	17,460,000	11,662,000	17,022,000
Rice.....	36,278,000	40,861,000	24,378,000
Potatoes (Irish)	442,536,000	286,953,000	360,772,000
Potatoes (sweet)	87,141,000	70,955,000	57,117,000
Total....	5,771,928,000	4,567,269,000	4,769,486,000

#### Live Stock on Farms and Ranges.

During the first half of 1917 there was particular apprehension lest the number of live stock should be decreased. As a matter of fact, owing to the greater abundance of feedstuffs that the large crops of the year made available and the prevailing prices, there was revealed a most gratifying increase in the principal classes of live stock—

an increase in the number of horses during the year of 353,000, or 1.7 per cent; of mules, 101,000, or 2.1 per cent; of milch cows, 390,000, or 1.7 per cent; of other cattle, 1,857,000, or 4.5 per cent; of sheep, 1,284,000, or 2.7 per cent, and of swine, 3,871,000, or 5.7 per cent. The increase of 4.5 per cent in the number of "other cattle" is due to an increase of 4.2 per cent in calves; 22.7 per cent in heifers for milk; 8.5 per cent in other heifers; a decrease of 3.2 per cent in steers, and an increase of 1.9 per cent in "other cattle" (milch cows not included). Swine over 6 months old increased 4.5 per cent; those under 6 months 7.8 per cent. Sheep over 6 months increased 0.3 of 1 per cent; under 6 months, 11.1 per cent.

It will be of interest to note that the number of live stock estimated on January 1, 1918, shows the following increases over January 1, 1914, the year before the beginning of the European war: Horses, 601,000, or 2.9 per cent; mules, 375,000, or 0.8 of 1 per cent; milch cows, 2,547,000, or 12.3 per cent; other cattle, 7,691,000, or 21.5 per cent; swine, 12,441,000, or 21.1 per cent. It is especially noteworthy that within the last year, for the first time in many years, the number of sheep has shown a tendency to increase.

The details regarding the numbers of live stock on farms and ranges on January 1, 1918, 1917, and 1914, are given in Table 3.

TABLE 3.—*Live stock on farms and ranges for Jan. 1, 1918, 1917, and 1914.*

Farm animals.	NUMBER.		
	Jan. 1, 1918.	Jan. 1, 1917.	Jan. 1, 1914.
Horses.....	21,563,000	21,210,000	20,962,000
Mules.....	4,824,000	4,723,000	4,449,000
Milch cows....	23,284,000	22,894,000	20,737,000
Other cattle..	43,546,000	41,689,000	35,855,000
Sheep.....	48,900,000	47,616,000	49,719,000
Swine.....	71,374,000	67,503,000	58,933,000
Total..	213,491,000	205,635,000	190,655,000

TABLE 3.—*Live stock on farms and ranges for Jan. 1, 1918, 1917, and 1914—Con.*

Farm animals.	VALUE.		
	Jan. 1, 1918.	Jan. 1, 1917.	Jan. 1, 1914.
Horses.....	\$2,248,626,000	\$2,182,307,000	\$2,291,638,000
Mules.....	621,064,000	558,006,000	551,017,000
Milch cows....	1,643,639,000	1,365,251,000	1,118,487,000
Other cattle..	1,780,052,000	1,497,621,000	1,116,333,000
Sheep.....	577,867,000	339,529,000	200,045,000
Swine.....	1,392,276,000	792,898,000	612,951,000
Total..	8,263,524,000	5,735,612,000	5,890,471,000

#### Value of Farm Products.

The total estimated value of all farm products, including animals and animal products, for 1917 is given as \$19,443,849,381, as against \$13,406,364,011 for 1916, and \$9,388,765,799 for the five-year average (1910-1914). These valuations are based upon prices received by producers, which are applied to the total output regardless of whether the products are consumed on the farms or sold.

The details for the three periods are given in Table 4.

TABLE 4.—*Estimated value of all farm products, including animals and animal products, 1917, 1916, and average for five years preceding the outbreak of the European war.*

Total.	Crops.	Animals and animal products.
1917 (preliminary).		
\$19,443,849,381	\$13,610,462,782	\$5,833,386,599
1916.		
13,406,364,011	9,054,458,922	4,351,905,089
Five-year average, 1910-1914—prewar (normal) condition.		
9,388,765,799	5,827,019,026	3,561,746,753

RESERVE.

2.  
Ar86Fp

U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE.  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY.  
The food production outlook.  
1918

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
LIBRARY.  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE TO AVOID  
PAYMENT OF POSTAGE \$300.

